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NOTES AND COMMENTS.

I.

PARNELL AND THE "TIMES."

THE London *Times* produces a letter, dated May 15th, 1882, signed Chas. S. Parnell, which the *Times* asserts was written by Mr. Parnell and addressed to Mr. Patrick Egan.

Mr. Parnell denies that he ever wrote, or dictated, or authorized such a letter to Egan or any one else.

Mr. Egan denies that he received such a letter from Mr. Parnell.

The letter is confessedly not in the handwriting of Mr. Parnell, but in that of some one to whom, the *Times* asserts, Mr. Parnell dictated it.

There is the matter, which, judged dispassionately, appears to have the following features, from which may be drawn these simple questions :

1. Where is the envelope of this letter ? Let us see the postage-stamps of England and the United States, with dates.

2. The party to whom Mr. Parnell dictated such a letter, so compromising (being diametrically opposed to his public professions at the time), must have been a confidential secretary or employé; to none other would he confide such a business. Who is this party ? One so employed by a great public leader would be known. Let him be produced as a witness to the signature which Mr. Parnell repudiates as a forgery.

3. The evidence of an expert (Mr. Netherclift) who says he cannot affirm, one way or the other, as to the genuineness of the signature, is hardly acceptable. But there may be evidence in the handwriting of the employé who wrote the body of the letter; the capital letters suspiciously resemble the commercial hand taught in the United States, and the whole composition has an American form.

4. Is the obligation of settling this matter incumbent on Mr. Parnell, who simply declares his signature to be a forgery, or with the newspaper that brings the accusation ?

5. The *Times* states that it is in possession of further proofs—it does not describe whether direct or indirect. Is it not incumbent on the journal to produce them ?

6. The *Times* states that the letter has been in its possession for some time. Is it not incumbent on the journal to explain why so grave a charge was kept until the great political crisis and party struggle arrived at its present stage, and not until then brought forward ?

The public utterances of Mr. Parnell at the time the letter is dated, May, 1882, are patent, and a part of political history. To supplement this record, Mr. Gladstone states that in 1882 he was approached by Mr. Parnell, shortly after the assassination of Cavendish and Burke, and privately consulted as to a step which Par-

nell felt inclined to take—to relinquish his leadership of the Irish party and to retire from political life. He said that he felt so horrified by his relation to and connection with Irish affairs, and so satisfied that the blow dealt by the assassins was mortal to his country, that he preferred to vacate his position, and have no more to do actively in a cause which was so disgraced. He seemed to rely on Mr. Gladstone's advice in this matter. Is it fairly conceivable by any unprejudiced mind that this proceeding was a silly and unnecessary imposture, and one at variance with the character of the man—*nemo fuit repente turpissimus*.

If the charge made by the *Times* had been made against the Speaker of the House of Commons, or against Mr. W. H. Smith, would not the editor or printer of the newspaper be brought to the bar of the House to answer the outrage upon the dignity of Parliament?

Does not the matter take this shape?

The newspaper is bound to furnish evidence to show that its charge was made in good faith.

The House of Commons is bound to vindicate the honor of its body—attacked in the person of one of its most conspicuous members.

The position is assumed by the *Times*, and indorsed by Mr. Chamberlain, that the accusation against Mr. Parnell is a criminal imputation, and his simple plea of not guilty is insufficient to satisfy an impartial and intelligent jury of his countrymen. Is this so? When a charge is made before any court, imputing a crime, the defendant puts in his plea denying the crime. Is it not incumbent on the prosecution to make out their case, and produce their evidence? Is it just, is it proper, to make a charge and then summon the accused to defend himself? The public is the court before which the case must be tried. The *Times* has brought its charge before that tribunal. The defendant can fairly claim that the proceedings should follow the course that justice prescribes in all other courts. Is it competent to any person or journal to point to a citizen and say, "You are a murderer: defend yourself from my imputation, or consider yourself branded?" Is it not, therefore, incumbent on the *Times* to prove that the letter is genuine? To be blind to this obligation indicates an amount of prejudice that is in itself an accusation which the intelligent will appreciate.

DION BOUCICAULT.

II.

THE TELEPHONE OF 1665.

"THERE is nothing new under the sun," not even the telephone. Permit me to state that in the year 1665 there was published in England a book with the title of "Micrographia." The full name, as indicated by the title page, is "Micrographia, or some Physiological Descriptions of Minute Bodies, made by magnifying glasses, etc. London, 1665, in fol. avec 38 plates, 12 à 15 francs. Vendu en maroquin rouge, 18 francs, Patu de Mello, et 29 francs, Fourcroy." The author was Doctor Robert Hooke, a celebrated scientist, mathematician, and philosopher, who was born in the Isle of Wight in 1635, and educated at Oxford. The work referred to contains various philosophical descriptions of minute bodies, made by magnifying glasses, as indicated in the title, together with "Observations and Inquiries" on them. In the preface, the learned scientist asserts that the lowest whispers, by certain means (which he does not make public), may be heard at the distance of a furlong; that he knew a way by which it is easy to hear any one speak through a wall three feet thick; and that *by means of an extended wire, sound may be conveyed to a very great distance, almost in an instant.*

This is certainly a most accurate description of the telephone, and far ante-